

Hazard Tree Removal Terwilliger AAR

Attendees:

Marc Dasher, Shadie Nimer, Daniel Preston, Galen Anderson, Duane Bishop, Randy Harbick, Brandon Colville, Alan Heath, Shane Kamrath, Lorenzo Montoya, Wendy Peterman, Shawn Sheldon, Rob Titcomb, Jenny Lippert, David Bishop, Brett Blundon, Trish Wilson, Nick Grant, Mark Richardson, Dean Schlichting, Brandon Green, Tammy Robinson, Holly Jewkes, Tracy Beck, Dave Halemeier, Darren Cross, Nikki Swanson, Tim Lahey, Kailee Nosler, Dylan McCoy, Tyson Cross, Robert Gentry, Aaron McDowell, Matt Peterson

What we would like to get out of the AAR: Learn about the hazard/danger tree mitigation, categorize what went well and draft something up for other forests to utilize in the future.

What was planned?

2017 Incident Commanders uncomfortable with treating Hazard trees that were dangerous for the public, not just the firefighters, out of their comfort zone (ex: Jones Fire). Utilized a Categorical Exclusion that took longer than expected, wanted to be more efficient for the 2018 fire season. Still dealing with trees from the 2014 Deception Fire because they weren't dealt with.

2018- Replicate what happened on the Milli Fire. Discussed with District resources and came up with prescriptions to get wanted effects on the ground.

Remove current and future hazard trees

Process each tree we could get within a tree and a half length of the road

Realized quickly prescriptions needed updated often due to topography etc., blanket prescription wouldn't work

Utilized mechanisms in place to mitigate hazards with the best means we had while we had the resources in place to do so.

Rebel Fire: came back a year later to mitigate hazards, huge work load, way more hazard trees than expected, did not have the work force in place to accomplish everything that needed to be done.

Continue mitigating hazards in sensitive resource areas, continue to update the prescriptions to get desired outcome

Meet with folks involved every three days to go over what was taking place

Expectation for READS: Can't stay on the roads to get all the work done, we have to get off the roads to accomplish work, READS will be out there full time

Danger trees needed to get on the ground and pulled to the roadways

Envisioned the engagements of READS to be similar to a READ directing dozer line

Want a READ with each contractor moving forward, evolved to READS hanging ribbons on certain trees to get a visual on the prescription being utilized in that specific area. Took a while to get to this point. John Erickson lead READ

Did not adhere strictly to the R6 hazard tree guidelines, was a source of confusion early on.

Given a letter from the Regional Forester that there were certain rules that were not going to be adhered to.

Confusion with language about Hazard tree and Danger tree assessment, combining the two, left up to interpretation.

What actually happened?

Utilized prescription in the CE, and utilized the authority of the AA, not necessarily the R6 guide. However, utilized language from the guide to help define “danger tree plus”.

Still having to fight the fire while simultaneously implementing the contract

Too much going on with the amount of READS available on the fire. BAER Team was in place at the same time as well.

Ensure we have the right READS in place if we want to implement this in the future

Asking a lot out of the READS at “firefighter pace”, get the right folks out there and have this front loaded prior to implementation if we want to be successful at this in the future.

What roads were we doing the danger tree removal on? Perimeter of the fire, anywhere that we used to stop the fire, not limited to maintenance level 1 or maintenance level 2

COR's Galen and Alan: READs were stretched thin. 8/9 people cutting danger trees at a time. Constant presence with contractors, daily briefings. Moving target, evolved trying to do it better, difficult to find loggers to do the work due to timing and the drop of the IFPL level. Having liaisons/divisions sups be the tie between the COR's and IMT's was extremely valuable.

Road scaling contract being completed simultaneously. Utilizing VIPR resources added another level of complexity/ defining who is responsible if someone was to get hurt etc.

Seemed to be trees cut that were outside of the prescription that the READS understood vs what the COR's interpretation of the prescription vs what the logger understood.

Some of the trees cut were cut due to operations/safety

There are places where folks did an excellent job and places there is extensive damage that will take years to repair.

READS weren't always available to rein in the work being done prior to the damage being done.

Agency Administrators- What happened that was different than what was expected?

Cut the logs to 20' because when they picked up a 40' the skidder couldn't handle it, in the future would have implemented cable logging.

Below the road was a little wetter than expected, should have had the ability to bring in a swing boom yarder to minimize soil damage etc.

Cougar Crossing area a little more open than expected. Met the prescription but still a little bit shocking when you see it, may face public scrutiny

Potential to do subsoiling in the future? There are a few units from the past where the trees aren't producing like they should due to the soil compaction that took place prior to the trees being planted.

Need a soil scientist to go out after the fact and determine which areas will need subsoiling

Acquisition: Turned from 1 to 2 contracts, a dozen line items, a dozen pieces of equipment to manage, used Miller Timber \$1¼ million, Rose Logging close to \$1 million added log trucks etc. One was paid through emergency money and one was paid through the fire.

Trying to coordinate the different schedules of each resources was difficult at times.

Chief's words: let's get after it and do the right thing, received some scrutiny from Becky Slick (incident finance), saying it's not necessarily fiscally right to have the fire pay for such operations, however Tracy stands by what we did and supports it in the future

Recommend taking photos and write a guide, READS don't necessarily have the frame of reference to be able to envision what the prescription could look like in the end

Any scrutiny from the public, congressionals etc. should come to the Agency Administrators, that burden should not be on the READs

READs felt as if they weren't invited to go out there at times/not safe to engage

Like the idea to have a more diverse READ team that could flag resource areas that are important to them.

Some areas that got damaged and disregarded are going to come with a hefty price tag for rehab.

Some people felt as if they provided input and weren't necessarily heard.

Had to shut down service contracts to allow individuals in, and clean up the roads to let vehicles through. Created perception that READS weren't welcome, relayed that

in the morning or evenings was the best time to visit sites so we didn't have to halt operations to let one vehicle through

Learned a vehicle to get a lot work done that was funded through a different mechanism, roads etc.

What should we do differently next time?

More robust set of READS that specialize in each specific resource area if we are going to do this in the future, two days off and come back, consistency

READS assigned specifically to the service contract portion, not the rest of the fire at the same time

1 READ per division, helpful to have another READ for the contract portion, issue is there aren't enough READS available during the time when you need them

District folks qualified as READS are busy trying to meet targets and aren't necessarily free to help with fires. In 2017 "all hands on deck" call came from Tracy, not necessarily the case for 2018, districts were a little more hesitant to let employees go due to the pressure of meeting end of year priorities

Have an Agency Administrator representative available for the service contract specifically

Immediate access to technical specialist was limited, improve this in the future

Managing expectations, creating a clear frame of reference of what the end result may look like

Incorporate this idea into the READ training

Lack of READS nation-wide

IC's do have some issues doing this sort of operation under "suppression repair".

Timing of implementation was key, not too early, and not too late where weather was an impact

Could potentially treat more areas affected by fire burned areas, not limited to roads (hiking trails, camp sites etc.)

Lead READ role is difficult, you don't get H-pay etc.

In the beginning started with a plan, in the end we got what we wanted, incorporate all lessons learned and create one document so we don't have to re-invent the wheel in the future

Have an interdisciplinary team to take Shadie's prescription and make it more robust for use in the future

Reach out to the loggers and see how they would do stuff differently

Bread and butter loggers will be harder to come by for these projects due to the timing. Most companies are busy with other jobs

Utilize a pick-up truck with snow plow to clear debris instead of the equipment on site so the operation isn't halted and work can be done more efficiently

Get fire folks more qualified and trained to have a better understanding of what sort of equipment is needed to accomplish this operation to stay ahead as we move forward

Planning: Have a fire/fuel break prescription prior to a fire affecting the area

Timeliness: don't encourage the implementation to take place much sooner than it did, would have been utter chaos if the fire blew up while trying to implement the service contract

Continue to grow the saw program and utilize qualified FS fallers to do some of this work in the future

Continue to have fire folks work closely with timber folks to recognize the importance of coming up with a quality product in the end

Forest wide understanding that there needs to be some people dedicated at the end of the season to help with these contracts

Write in the prescription time and money in the spring to come back and revisit some of the work that wasn't completed or needs to be assessed

Leaders intent: delegation of authority discusses danger/hazard tree removal with the expectation that it could be implemented, IMT's won't be responsible for putting together or implementing the service contracts, just aware that it could take place

Put together short team of people to put together a boiler point template that can be utilized in the future, pre-loaded document that can be implemented when needed, prior to fire season

Think of it as an incident within an incident, run two different operations, keep service contract and fire operations separate